



Advocates for people with Intellectual disabilities  
and related developmental disabilities

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March 6, 2009

**Testimony before Committee on Planning and Development**  
**Re: H.B. #6596 (Raised), "An Act Concerning Notification Requirements**  
**for Halfway Houses"**

by

**Lynn Warner, Executive Director/The Arc of Connecticut**

Senator Coleman, Representative Sharkey, and Members of the Planning and Development Committee:

I am Lynn Warner, Executive Director of The Arc of Connecticut, a 57-year-old statewide advocacy organization for individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families. We have 23 local chapters that provide supports, services, and advocacy for individuals with intellectual disabilities throughout Connecticut.

The Arc of Connecticut is here today to testify strongly against **House Bill #6596, "(Raised), "An Act Concerning Notification Requirements for Halfway Houses,** as this Raised Bill jeopardizes both the confidentiality and safety of some of the most vulnerable citizens with intellectual disabilities in Connecticut.

As written, H.B. 6596 would be in direct opposition to the long established Federal and State legal rights of individuals with intellectual disabilities regarding their decision to live where they choose. The protection of these rights include Section 8-3e of the Connecticut Statutes which states in part that **no zoning regulations** shall treat any community residence that houses six or fewer individuals with intellectual disabilities and necessary staff persons and that is licensed under the provisions of 17a-227; which is the statute for licensing with the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) differently from any single family residence.

**The Arc/Connecticut, Inc. Member Chapters:** Futures, Inc., Middletown / Greater Enfield Arc / Family Options, Watertown / Arc of Farmington Valley / Friends of New Milford, Inc. / Litchfield County Arc / LOV-Arc, Westbrook / MARC, Inc., Manchester / MARC: Community Resources, Portland / Arc of Meriden-Wallingford / Arc of Greater New Haven / Arc/New London County / Options, Unlimited / Arc of Plainville / Arc of Quinebaug Valley / SARAH Inc., Gulford / SARAH Seneca Residential Services / SARAH Tuxis Residential Services / STAR, Norwalk / Arc of Southington / Tri County Arc, Columbia / Waterbury Arc / WeCAHR, Danbury

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Simply stated, people with intellectual disabilities are citizens and citizens of Connecticut do not have to go through Planning and Zoning to live in the communities of their choice.

H.B. 6596 also requires notification to specific municipal officials during the application process for the construction of a community residence. Contacting local police and fire stations makes good common sense in order to notify first responders of medical and mobility issues in cases of emergencies. However, this relationship is usually initiated *after* a home has been established, residents have moved in, and natural relationships are allowed to develop without preconceived opinions.

Finally H.B. 6596 violates the privacy and confidentiality, as well as the potential safety, of people with intellectual disabilities by establishing a state-wide electronic database which would include of all public or private group homes and then making this database accessible to the public via the internet. This database would allow any type of predator(s) to this population to target a home within any community of Connecticut.

Where does the individual right to privacy come in? Since zoning regulations are not applicable by law to these residences, and therefore are to be treated as any other single family residence – then these individuals should be afford they same rights to their privacy as any other citizen.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today and we ask that you vote against H.B. 6596 on behalf of the people with intellectual disabilities living peacefully and safely in Connecticut.